

April 10, 2007

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD APRIL 10, 2007

A Regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Hopewell, Virginia, was held Tuesday, April 10, 2007, at 5:35 PM in the City Council Chambers, Municipal Building, 300 North Main Street, Hopewell, Virginia.

PRESENT: Steven R. Taylor, Mayor
Brenda S. Pelham, Vice Mayor
Christina J. Luman-Bailey, Councilor
Curtis W. Harris, Councilor
Kenneth B. Emerson, Councilor
E. Randy Sealey, Councilor
N. Gregory Cuffey, Councilor

John M. Altman, Jr., Interim City Manager
Edwin N. Wilmot, City Attorney
Ann M. Romano, City Clerk

Mayor Taylor opened the meeting at 5:35 PM. Roll call was taken as follows:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---------|
| Mayor Taylor | - | present |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | present |
| Councilor Bailey | - | present |
| Councilor Harris | - | present |
| Councilor Emerson | - | present |
| Councilor Sealey | - | present |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | present |

TOWN HALL MEETING – TAX ASSESSMENTS & FY 2007/2008 BUDGET

City Administration made a brief presentation and then opened a question and answer period. Interim City Manager, March Altman, introduced Finance Director, Elesteen Hager who gave the overview of the reassessment with the Real Estate Assessor, Sandra Hughes.

The purpose of the presentation was to provide Council with a better understanding of the general reassessment process. The City of Hopewell conducts a biennial reassessment, in other words, reassessment of all real property every two years. The 2006 Biennial Reassessment has been completed and notices were mailed to the property owners March 2, 2007. The State requires a general or annual reassessment by all localities and that the properties are assessed at 100% of market value in a fair and equitable manner.

The steps used in determining the assessed values of properties are as follows:

- Sales ratio studies are done for the sales of properties the prior two years before the reassessment year. In the 2006 reassessment the ratios used were for the years 2004 and 2005. The combined ratio for the two years indicated or overall ratio was 85%. The sales ratios indicate what percent our assessments are of the sales. The residential properties are separated into 42 neighborhoods and in addition to overall sales ratio, sales ratios are done for each individual neighborhood. Neighborhoods are made up of subdivisions which adjoin and have similar types of dwellings.
- Sales ratios are also calculated for vacant land, multi-family, commercial and industrial sales, but this presentation will focus on single-family residential properties.
- Once the ratios are analyzed, including any vacant residential land sales which have taken place, field inspections are performed on the sales and then on the other properties in a given

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neighborhood. Upon the completion of the field inspections new assessments are determined by using replacement cost new less depreciation. If the valuation for sales is less than the selling price or higher than the selling price, a neighborhood adjustment is applied to the calculated assessments.

- When the reassessment is completed for all properties in the City, notices are sent to the property owners, showing the old assessment and the new assessment which is effective January 1 of a given year. The 2006 Reassessment has an effective date of January 1, 2007.
- Single-family residential properties increased an average of 21% for the reassessment just completed.
- Property owners can then appeal their assessment during the Assessor's Hearings and if they are not satisfied, they can then appeal to the Board of Equalization. The Board of Equalization is holding their hearings April 10-12 from 7 PM to 9PM and appointments are required. The final step is the appeal process is to the Circuit Court.
- A sales ratio study has been completed for the 2006 sales, using the 2007 assessments and the study indicates that our 2007 assessments are 83% of market value.
- The assessor's hearings are completed and changes made were less than a percent.

Residential properties in Hopewell currently on the market may be remaining on the market longer, but 2007 sales indicate that the selling prices are still higher than our 2007 assessments.

At 5:50 PM the formal presentation concluded. The City Council members moved down to the audience to hear questions from citizens.

REASSESSMENT

| QUESTIONS | ANSWERS/DISCUSSION |
|--|--|
| Was this assessment based on 2004/2005? | Mrs. Hughes introduced herself and responded that the 2006/2007 sales were displayed to give citizens an idea of what is going on in Hopewell. Sales are getting top dollar. The 2007 assessment is based on 2004/2005 sales. The 2006 & 2007 were not used for the 2007 assessment. |
| How many people have appealed? | Mrs. Hughes responded that of the 9,679 taxable properties, 252 notices were received. The Real Estate Assessor looked at 252 parcels. Thirty of those received no change; 237 inquires were made. Eleven were cancelled and the Real Estate office talked to 226. |
| One citizen asked why there was a 65.35% increase on his property. | Mrs. Hughes responded that it was based on sales; all properties began with the same rate. Depreciation is taken off for age and condition. 5.86% was the lowest and 33% was the highest increase in assessment. The Board of Equalization would meet on April 10, 11 and 12, and would remain in session until December 31, 2007. |
| What percentage amount above the budget does the City aim for in setting the tax rate? | The City starts out with a letter from departments requesting what they need. Then the City gets revenue numbers, state numbers and starts there. This particular year we knew there would be some reassessment issues. The City Manager felt that eight cents (8¢) tax real estate reduction was appropriate. |
| | A zero tax increase would be \$1.10, which would generate the same as 2006- \$11.1 million. That would be equivalent to 19¢ off the current tax rate. |

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| | |
|--|--|
| | In 2000 the City purchase a software package, Pro-Val. This is the first year that values were generated using that package. This was the first year that we had all of the characteristics in the software so that we could use the information for the reassessment for this year. It is not a location adjustment; it is a market adjustment. The City is trying to get as close as possible to our sales. The department has gone out and remeasured and sketched. They have photographed 98% of the properties. There are 42 neighborhoods that were established 25-30 years ago. Some new ones were established. |
| One citizen asked if the City would be willing to purchase the properties at the new assessed price. | The mayor responded that it would, if it were in the strategic interest of the City. |
| | It was suggested that citizens be supplied with a detailed copy of the reassessment whenever it increases more than 10%. |

Councilor Sealey encourages people to go down and see what the Assessor has. Check those things without contesting it. It can go either way. Go to the Board of Equalization. Use the checks and balances. Councilor Cuffey feels that it is an interesting concept, worth looking into. Councilor Emerson indicated that the information is available from Mrs. Hughes now. Councilor Bailey agrees that it is a good idea. Vice Mayor Pelham feels that any increase over the average reassessment of over 10% should be accompanied by a detailed explanation/justification.

Councilor Harris shared that the assessment process comes from the General Assembly. The final appeal process is the Circuit Court. He asked the City Attorney if Council can speak to the suggestion that was made on its own. The City Attorney responded that City Council has no authority to tell the assessor to cap the assessment. However, it would be lawful to give citizens detailed information when the assessment increase is "X" % or more.

Mayor Taylor feels that we publicly have the technology to select the items to appear on a customized report.

SCHOOL BUDGET

Christine Weston, Teacher, Ward #5, spoke in support of the School Budget. Her father taught in the Hopewell School System for 30 years. She and her husband attended Hopewell schools. There are many positive aspects of Hopewell schools. We have a great School Board. She has 8 Special Ed Students, and 11 other students. She requested that Council please fully fund the School's Budget request.

Vice Mayor Pelham addressed Council as a citizen and as a school employee in requesting Council support for full funding of the School Board Budget.

Councilor Harris reminded Council that 20 years ago citizens came to Council to ask that taxes be raised only for new schools. Since that time taxes have been lowered even though we have not finished paying for those schools. We are using school money to hire Police Officers, etc. We finally voted to make 18¢ available for schools. Great things are going on in our school system. The School Board is asking for full funding. He supports that fully.

Vice Mayor Pelham thinks that Council should consider the Gentlemen's Agreement for 60/40 share. This was the year that schools were going to get their full funding.

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Councilor Bailey attended the School Board Meeting with Vice Mayor Pelham and Councilor Cuffey recently. She agrees with Vice Mayor Pelham. Teachers deserve a raise. We need to retain our teachers. Councilor Cuffey feels that we should put the money into the school system. If not you will have to deal with them in the Police Department. BRAC – we can brag about our schools.

Councilor Emerson supports the school system. We want to prepare students for college. If we do not support the schools, we will be paying more to the prisons. Councilor Sealey reminded Council that this is only the budget recommended by the Administration.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:00 PM **motion** was made by Councilor Sealey, and seconded by Councilor Emerson, to Convene into Closed Session to discuss disposition of property, prospective siting of a business, and legal matters (HDC suit), in accordance with Virginia Code § 2.2-3711 (A) (3) (5) & (7). Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Councilor Harris | - | yes |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

OPEN SESSION

At 7:41 PM Council convened into Open Session. Councilors responded to the question: “Were the only matters discussed in the Closed Meeting public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements; and public business matters identified in the motion to convene into Closed Session?” Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Councilor Harris | - | yes |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

Mayor Taylor opened the regular meeting at 7:42 PM. Roll call was taken as follows:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---------|
| Mayor Taylor | - | present |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | present |
| Councilor Bailey | - | present |
| Councilor Harris | - | present |
| Councilor Emerson | - | present |
| Councilor Sealey | - | present |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | present |

Prayer was offered by Chaplain Eva Brown, Good Shepard Baptist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

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Mayor Taylor announced that Rev. Harris's church was having revival this week and would be leaving the Council meeting early.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion was made by Councilor Sealey, and seconded by Councilor Emerson, to approve the Consent Agenda: Minutes-Special Meeting March 23, 2007 and Regular Meetings March 27, 2007; Pending List; Information for Council Review: [Hopewell Twinning Association, Inc. minutes 3/19/07; District CSB minutes 2/22/07; Senior Citizens Advisory Commission minutes 2/20/07 & Agenda 3/20/07; ARLS minutes 2/20/07]; Personnel Change Report; Financial Report; Public Hearings Announcements: None; Routine Approval of Work Sessions: None; Ordinances on second and final reading: None; Proclamations/Resolutions/Presentations: April 2007 – Fair Housing Month; Administrative Professionals Week – April 22-28, 2007 & Administrative Professionals Day – April 25, 2007. Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Councilor Harris | - | yes |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

PROCLAMATION **FAIR HOUSING**

WHEREAS, the City of Hopewell is proud to join the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in celebrating the 39th anniversary of the **Fair Housing Act** of 1968; and,

WHEREAS, the 1968 **Fair Housing Act** guarantees the right of all Americans to dwell in the neighborhood of their choice, is one of the most important components of our national civil rights policy; and,

WHEREAS, even though this non-discriminatory policy is the law of the land, its proper enforcement requires the continued cooperation of all levels of government, the real estate and homebuilding industries and private citizens; and,

WHEREAS, throughout the City of Hopewell, this spirit of cooperation is being provided through the efforts of our state, federal and local governments and with the support of countless community and nonprofit organizations; and,

WHEREAS, promoting equal housing opportunity is essential to our larger mission of promoting justice in all areas of life and for all citizens, and equal housing opportunity has a dramatic impact on school integration and the acceptance and understanding of ethnic and racial diversity.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Steven R. Taylor, Mayor of the City of Hopewell, Virginia, do hereby proclaim

April 2007
as
Fair Housing Month

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In the City of Hopewell and do urge all citizens to join in creating and promoting fair housing opportunities for all people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Hopewell to be affixed on this 10th day of April, 2007.

/s/ Steven R. Taylor, Mayor,
City of Hopewell, Virginia

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PROCLAMATION
ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS

WHEREAS, administration professionals play an essential role in coordinating the office operations of businesses, government, educational institutions, and other organizations; and

WHEREAS, the work of administrative professionals today requires advanced knowledge and expertise in communications, computer software, office technology, project management, organization, customer service and other vital office management responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, **Administrative Professionals Week** is observed annually in workplaces around the world to recognize the important contributions of administrative support staff and is sponsored by the **International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP)**; and

WHEREAS, the theme of **Administrative Professionals Week 2007** is “**Shaping the Future**,” reflecting how today’s career-minded administrative professionals are handling increasingly advanced roles and looking toward the future by recognizing the importance of life-long learning.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Steven R. Taylor, hereby proclaim the

Week of April 22-28, 2007 as
Administrative Professionals Week
and Wednesday, April 25 as
Administrative Professionals Day

saluting the valuable contributions of administrative professionals in the workplace. And, I call on all employers to support continued training and development for administrative staff, recognizing that a well-trained workforce is essential for success in today’s business world

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Hopewell to be affixed the 24th day of April, 2007.

/s/ Steven R. Taylor, Mayor,
City of Hopewell, Virginia

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PUBLIC HEARING – REQUEST TO VACATE A PORTION OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY KNOWN AS LAVINDALE STREET BETWEEN SOUTH 1ST AVENUE AND SOUTH 2ND AVENUE

The City of Hopewell has received a request from Toby Huff, on behalf of Burt Hunter, to vacate a portion of the Lavindale right-of-way between South 1st Avenue and South 2nd Avenue. Mr. Hunter would like to use the area as a recreational amenity for the neighborhood.

The right-of-way in question is unimproved (a “paper” street) and is located within the Resource Management Area of the Chesapeake Bay Protection Overlay area. Mr. Hunter owns the properties on both sides of the subject right-of-way and therefore there are no other property owners involved in this request. In accordance with City Council’s Right-of-way Vacation Policy, the Planning Commission reviewed this request at its March 1, 2007 meeting and voted to recommend approval of the request to City Council.

Applicant Toby Huff, and also on behalf of Burt Hunter, 1110 South 2nd Avenue, addressed Council to support the request. Mr. Hunter wishes to use the property for recreational purposes; to install a gazebo to have barbeques, weddings, etc. There is already a sewer that has never been used.

There being no other speakers, the Public Hearing was closed at 7:59 PM.

Councilor Sealey inquired why the Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve the request, while administration recommended denial. Mr. Altman explained that the property is zoned Industrial M-1. He cautioned Council that whatever is proposed must comply. The property could never be used for industrial purposes.

Motion was made by Councilor Sealey, and seconded by Vice Mayor Pelham to approve the request to vacate a portion of the right-of-way known as Lavindale Street between South 1st Avenue and South 2nd Avenue. Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Councilor Harris | - | yes |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

PUBLIC HEARING – TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSED FY 2007-2008 FINANCIAL PLAN “CITY BUDGET”

The City Manager is required under Chapter V, Section 4 (c) of the Code of the City of Hopewell to “prepare and submit the annual budget to Council and be responsible for its administration after its adoption.” The FY 2007-2008 Financial Plan totals \$106,721,007. The General Fund Budget totals \$40,268,763.

It is very important to continue the pursuit of all economic enhancement strategies to overcome fiscal pressure associated with the City’s population loss, maximization of developable land, and flat revenue growth. Therefore, the need for service enhancements without the corresponding availability to fund them will continue to place considerable stress on the City staff to maintain service levels within existing budgetary parameters.

SUMMARY OF FUNDS BUDGETS

| Fund | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | INCR (DECR) | PERCENT CHANGE |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| | ACTUAL BUDGET | PROPOSED BUDGET | | |
| General Fund | \$37,769,188 | \$40,268,763 | \$2,499,575 | 6.21% |
| Recreation Fund | 1,583,384 | 1,692,473 | 109,089 | 6.45% |
| Social Services Fund | 4,631,856 | 4,607,814 | -24,042 | -0.52% |
| CSA Fund | 2,350,426 | 3,282,306 | 931,880 | 28.39% |
| Self-Insurance Fund | 382,332 | 370,950 | -11,382 | -3.07% |
| Cemetery Care Fund | 66,620 | 80,950 | 14,330 | 17.70% |
| Marina/Harbor Fund | 110,200 | 108,500 | -1,700 | -1.57% |
| City Beautification Fund | 9,840 | 0 | -9,840 | -100.00% |
| School Operating Fund | 41,768,182 | 42,380,425 | 612,243 | 1.44% |
| School Textbook Fund | 540,000 | 950,000 | 410,000 | 43.16% |
| School Cafeteria Fund | 2,268,172 | 2,040,740 | -227,432 | -11.14% |
| Building & Bus Fund | 1,147,946 | 784,495 | -363,451 | -46.33% |
| Solid Waste Fund | 1,657,340 | 2,065,665 | 408,325 | 19.77% |
| Sewer Services Fund | 4,872,278 | 6,431,701 | 1,559,423 | 24.25% |
| HRWTF Fund | 11,514,521 | 12,354,835 | 840,314 | 6.80% |
| CDBG Fund | 221,824 | 221,824 | 0 | 0.00% |
| Capital Projects Fund | 5,041,291 | 5,121,821 | 80,530 | 1.57% |
| Econ. Development Fund | 359,183 | 354,748 | -4,435 | -1.25% |
| Interfund Transfers | -16,873,741 | -16,397,003 | 476,738 | -2.91% |
| TOTALS | \$99,420,842 | \$106,721,007 | \$7,300,165 | 6.84% |

PROPOSED TAX RATES ON ASSESSMENT VALUES

| | 2006 | 2007 |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Real Estate | \$1.20 per \$100 | \$1.12 per \$10 |
| Machinery and Tools | 3.05 per \$100 | 3.05 per \$100 |
| Personal Property | 3.05 per \$100 | 3.05 per \$100 |

Dr. Jane McCullen, President, **Historic Hopewell Foundation, Inc.**, 511 Mansion Drive, Hopewell, thanked Council for past support and requested support for their 2007-2008 Budget Request of \$63,300 (filed in the City Clerk's Office).

Arif Ukani, 1001 W. Broadway, Hopewell, addressed Council in opposition to the proposed cigarette tax. He and his father have been in business in the City of Hopewell since 1991 and have fully supported Hopewell in the payment of all taxes. They have a total of 9 employees at two convenience store locations, Broadway Convenience, 1001 W. Broadway, and Blue Devil's Convenience, 1505 W. Broadway. This proposed cigarette tax would severely lessen his income as his good customers will go elsewhere. A dramatic reduction in cigarette and associated sales could cause him to have to reduce the number of his employees. He implored Council to consider the local merchants that contribute to the revenue stream of the city and not damage their ability to make a living. We need solutions NOT new taxes.

Brenda Harrup, **Heritage Gardens**, 303 Ramsey Avenue, Hopewell, thanked Council for their past support. She asked for their full support of the City Manager's budget request. She gave a brief

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review of activities for the past year: installation of a gazebo, first opening last Friday, condition of the children's garden with 35 children will continue this year. Direct inquiries to her at 458-1892.

Willie Brown, Executive Director of Virginia Scholarship and Youth Develop Foundation, 600 Crawford Street, Petersburg, asked for \$10,000 over four years. Scholarships have gone to 19 students in 11 universities and colleges. Hopewell High School distributes paperwork to all graduates. All money goes to the students and is need based. The scholarship provides 80% and the remaining 20% is usually provided by the family.

Cheryl Collins, President and CEO of the **Hopewell Preservation, Inc., Beacon Theatre**, 401 North Main Street, Hopewell, asked Council's support of the \$10,000 request. The funds are for 54 scholarships for \$150 Youth Theatre Workshops, which is in development. They now have four full-time staff and will soon have two more. (Documentation filed in City Clerk's Office.)

Brent Fleenor, 510 North 4th Avenue, Hopewell, is a non-smoker who addressed Council regarding the 50¢ per pack proposed cigarette tax. It will drive business away from Hopewell. People will go to Chester, Prince George and Colonial Heights. The tax will take away \$50,000 a week from Hopewell. This tax is the wrong way of doing it. It is unfairly taxing a minority of people in Hopewell. The City could consider a meal tax, a sales tax, or another type of tax. There are thousands of people who could not be here tonight who oppose this tax.

James L. Petry, Cigarette City, 333 Cavalier Square, Hopewell, addressed Council saying that this tax will hurt many people. Hopewell will lose a lot of revenue. He begged Council not to pass this tax. He presented a petition with over 1500 signatures of those opposed to the tax.

Larry W. Howell supports Cigarette City and opposes the cigarette tax. He named several small family stores and businesses in Hopewell. This tax would cost him \$400 per year. The Property Tax just went up \$550 per year. He is on a fixed budget. He asked that Council please not run businesses and tax base out of Hopewell.

Bettina Coghill, Riverside Criminal Justice Agency, thanked Council for past support and asked for support of their 2007-2008 budget request. She reported the fifth graduating class. They have been in operation for over 20 years. Fifty percent of their population is from Hopewell. They have a 78% success rate with probation.

Rodney Butler, Virginia State University, requested scholarship funds for VSU. The University will graduate its first PhD in May 2007 and will graduate four more. He asked for Council support of VSU's budget request.

Charles Parker, 718 Cedar Level Road, Hopewell, asked Council why they are considering taxing cigarettes and not alcohol.

Elliott Eliades, 900 Mansion Drive, Hopewell, asked Council's full support for the School Budget.

Vera Edmondson, 1107 Winston Churchill Drive, Hopewell is a teacher and asked Council for full funding for the School Board Budget.

There being no other speakers, the Public Hearing was closed at 8:40 PM.

The following letter was read into the record:

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April 6, 2007

To the City Council Members and the People of the City of Hopewell:

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this important meeting today via this letter even though I live many miles away in California. I cherish growing up in Hopewell, was the salutatorian graduate of Hopewell High in 1970, and still have treasured family and friends in my beloved hometown. My mother, Frances Johnson Holt, still owns property in Hopewell. She is almost 94 years old and she lives with me in California now. She is unable to transact business for herself on the unfair assessments her properties have been given again. That is why I would like to speak from my heart on her behalf to you today about a matter of critical importance, the unfairness and inequity of the way some properties are being evaluated for assessment in the city. I content that my mother has been a victim of this unfairness for years. I wish to bring her case before you today.

The properties in question are both on Block 10 in Cedar Level. The sub-parcel numbers are 0250-0360 and 0250-0305. This land, in fact, sits very visibly just across the street from the new WAWA on Woodlawn Street. In 2005, I had the two small rental houses on the property demolished because they had fallen into disrepair. This whole block was rezoned B-4 (Corridor Development District) years ago which sets up specific regulations and limits uses for this land. Because of its lack of depth at only 94 feet, by itself, this land has little use. The assessor knows this. This is because of the required setback regulations of 40-ft. (front) and 25-ft. (back) of any future building structure. She knows also that there is no room on the land to have adequate parking for commercial ventures. **The value of my mother's land should not rest with what could hypothetically be done in the future if parcels are sold with hers as package deals. That is exactly what the city of Hopewell assessor has done for many years, and I contend that it is flawed and unfair.**

On the current assessment change notifications mailed to all property owners it states... "The law also requires that assessments be uniform in nature as to like properties of similar value."

I would like to give information now for you to decide whether the assessor is following this law.

In 2005, I appeared before the board of equalization challenging her assessments then. The board only lowered the valuations \$12,500, roughly equal to the value of the two demolished houses. At that time, I did quite a bit of research about the ownership and valuations of other properties in Block 10 with identical zoning, which I would like to share with you today. These sub-parcel numbers whose valuations are available for public viewing are: 0250-0310, 0250-0311, 0250-0320, 0250-0325, 0250-0385, 0250-0370, 0250-0365, 0250-0375, 0250-0335, 0250-0340, 0250-0345, and 0250-0355). With the exceptions of only my mother's property and parcel 0250-0355 next door, all other parcels are owned by two prominent citizens of the city of Hopewell, whose names appear at the conclusion of this letter. In fact, these two individuals own a vast portion of rental homes in the city of Hopewell at this time. I would like to relate to you now about how the assessments have been done on their properties on this block.

Since 1985, the only properties that have received an increase in valuation every single period are my mother's and the parcel next door, owned by Teresa Smith! The eleven other properties on the block, owned separately by the two investors, 28 times have not received increases in their valuations or bills! How can this be fair and equitable?

I contend that my mother has paid more than her fair share for many years. When I spoke to the two investors about this in 2005, they agreed that her assessments were too high. When you

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combine the fact that her land is relatively unusable, as is, because of its small size and lack of depth, how can the 2007 valuations of \$188,500 (amended by phone by Mrs. Hughes to \$104,200) and \$33,300 be fair? Mrs. Hughes wrote in at the bottom of a plat map she sent me that "Properties having street frontage were valued using \$800 per front foot (with adjustments for depth, volume, shape and access). Not all parcels received all of the aforementioned adjustments." That ambiguous language leaves quite a bit of room for subjectivity and even possible favoritism. I hope that this is not the case.

Once again now, I call on the assessor to roll back the valuations on these properties. I have more than proven that they are inequitable and unfair. I also call on all citizens and property owners in the city of Hopewell to consider closely your valuations and compare them with other comparable nearby properties. It is easy to find this public information in the assessor's office. You should be on the lookout and step up and challenge the assessments when it seems fitting. **Don't be deceived! The city of Hopewell will lower your rate this year, but your increased property valuations will be in place for future rate increases down the road. They must be challenged NOW!**

I love my city and still believe in right and wrong. I also believe it is right to confront injustice when it comes your way. This is such a time. Doing business the old-fashioned way is best. I believe that this city will be blessed for dealing with its citizens honorably and with integrity.

Thank you for listening to my lengthy and heartfelt message.

Respectfully,
Vicky Holt Abramson

25424 Via Nautica
Valencia, CA 91355
616-254-5552, vavic@ca.rr.com

*Riley Ingram, Sr., delegate to Virginia Assembly and real estate broker
*Judge Kenneth Nye

PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED FY 2007-2008 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) BUDGET

The City of Hopewell has received its FY 2007-2008 allocation of funding in the amount of \$218,552. The City Administration has reviewed all of the applications for funding submitted by various agencies and has developed a proposed FY 2007-2008 CDBG budget for City Council's consideration.

The FY 2007-2008 Financial Plan anticipates \$218,552 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, which is a reduction of 1.5% from the FY 2006-2007 allocation. The City staff proposes allocating \$32,782 to various organizations to support public service activities. This amount represents 15% of the entitlement grant, which is the HUD-established maximum amount that can be allocated to such activities. The balance of the grant includes \$43,710 or 20% for administration of the program and \$142,058 or 65% for the fund balance, which has been historically utilized for infrastructure and housing improvements.

CDBG allocations have been steadily decreasing since the FY 2005-2006 allocation. Further reductions in HUD dollars will result in decreased funding opportunities for local qualified projects. Consequently, these organizations will have to increase solicitation of funding to non-governmental agencies.

Bill Gandel and **Rev. Rudolph Dunbar, CARES**, sought Council support for FY 2007-2008 Budget allocation for the homeless population. Rev. Dunbar, 3908 Yorktown Drive, Hopewell, thanked

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Council for their past support. CARES is located in the Tri-cities area and its motto is, "Always lend a helping hand."

Bernetta Quinn, Healthy Families, 200 West Randolph Road, Hopewell, asked that Council fully fund their grant request. She thanked them for the \$6,000 given in the past. She invited them to the Dinner Dance fund raiser to be held on April 22 at the Beacon Theatre.

Channa Ramsey, Executive Director of the **James House**, 1016 Maplewood Avenue, Hopewell, thanked anyone who has dropped off donations. She asked Council for continued support of the James House.

Ginger Hawks, volunteer, **ElderHomes**, Petersburg, but serves Hopewell also. They provide health and safety repairs. They served 51 homes since June 2006, four of which were in Hopewell. They are partnered with the John Randolph Foundation and Hopewell in the past. Ms. Hawks was present in the place of **Lynn Haynes, Executive Director**, who was unable to attend.

There being no other speakers, the Public Hearing was closed at 8:59 PM.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

Jo Turek, Director of the Department of Recreation and Parks, 100 West City Point Road, announced the Jack Randolph River Fest and Cat Quest, on April 14 at the City Marina. It begins on Saturday at 8:00 AM.

There being no other speakers, Communications from Citizens closed at 9:04 PM.

CITIZEN/COUNCILOR REQUEST – MAYOR TAYLOR – CITY MANAGER APPOINTMENT

Mayor Taylor announced City Council's appointment of a City Manager, Edwin Daley, and the execution of a contract that authorized a salary of \$145,000 per year and other incentives.

Councilor Harris announced to citizens that 30 applications were submitted to the City's consulting firm. Of the 30 there were several African/Americans. Six were given to Council to review. None of the six were African/American. He suggested to Council to go out and see if there were others that could be considered. Council did not agree. He is concerned that they should give every opportunity to persons for employment at the City of Hopewell Not a single woman made the list. Councilor Harris has spoken to EEOC to determine whether or not they would have some interest in this situation.

Mayor Taylor explained that the City used an executive search firm. They recruit candidates. ICMA (International City Manager's Association) encourages minority applicants. Springsted would recruit minorities but they chose not to apply.

Edwin Daley has been City Manager in Winchester, Virginia since 1986. He is the incoming president of the ICMA. Councilor Cuffey feels that Mr. Daley is a well-rounded individual with professional skills in public safety, economic development, etc. It is important to Councilor Bailey that the new City Manager balance economic development and community, neighborhoods, state and federal money in revitalization, etc. He supports the Main Street designation for Hopewell.

Vice Mayor Pelham said that this Council was hesitant to give Alan Archer a \$4,000 raise and did not hesitate to give this person a \$40,000 raise. Councilor Sealey feels strongly that we need a City Manager. If he does the job that we think he will do, he will be worth \$145,000. In Councilor Emerson's

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opinion, the interview and selection process was very difficult. He looks forward to working with Mr. Daley.

Motion was made by Councilor Emerson, and seconded by Councilor Sealey, to resolve to appoint Edwin Daley as City Manager and to authorize the execution of a contract setting a salary of \$145,000 per year and other incentives. Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Councilor Harris | - | NO |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

CITIZEN/COUNCILOR REQUEST – VICE MAYOR PELHAM – HOPEWELL DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP – VIRGINIA MAIN STREET RESOLUTION

Councilor Bailey reported that Interim City Manager Steve Herbert budgeted approximately \$50,000 for the Main Street Program.

DISCUSSION: Need a director and volunteer staff. Who would the director report to? Independent organization linked to the City. Director would report to the independent organization – would report to the City Manager. Director would report to the Board of Trustees. One Councilor has many concerns with taking action on this at this time. This would commit a lot of funds without back ground and not knowing how it would work. The key is to get merchants on board as part of this process. The Downtown Partnership – get the City Manager – get vested interest from the City. If the City Manager is involved, that is enough from him. “Bottom Up” development. Grass roots effort. For this to be successful, need business support. Maybe we should seek affiliate status.

City Administration looked back and saw that the City sought to seek affiliate status under Alan Archer. Mr. Steve Herbert made a recommendation for a City employed Project Coordinator. Mr. Altman’s concern would be the commitment for five years. He does not know the fiscal impact.

This resolution does not designate a specific amount. Steve Herbert said indirectly under the City. The director would answer to the board not the City Manager. This resolution is a formality that is required in order to apply. The new City Manager offered to come with the City on May 2 at 10:00 AM in Richmond. This process started eight years ago. We want the speed of government to move forward. It would add to the revitalization of downtown. The City put up more that \$1 million to support the Beacon Theatre.

Motion was made by Councilor Harris, and seconded by Vice Mayor Pelham, to resolve to approve the Virginia Main Street Program resolution. Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Councilor Harris | - | yes |
| Councilor Emerson | - | NO |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | NO |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

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**CITIZEN/COUNCILOR REQUEST – VICE MAYOR PELHAM/COUNCILOR BAILEY –
ESTABLISH A STRATEGY IN REGARD TO THE PURCHASE OF AND THE RELOCATION
OF THE RESIDENTS OF THE BLUFFS**

Vice Mayor Pelham and Councilor Bailey have requested that City Council establish a strategy in regard to the purchase of and the relocation of the residents of the Bluffs.

Motion was made by Vice Mayor Pelham, and seconded by Councilor Bailey, to reconsider the purchase of the Bluffs and pursue looking at another developer before the City uses the \$3.186 million of the citizens' money.

It is advisable for the City to assume the role of facilitator in both the purchase of the bluffs and the relocation of its residents. A private developer would be better equipped to enact the actual purchase and redevelopment of the site. The Housing Authority is the proper agent to issue Section 8 vouchers for eligible residents. The City will facilitate the private developer's redevelopment of the site and will assist the residents in the relocation process.

DISCUSSION: There are developers very much interested in a public/private partnership. Council should look at the public/private option more shrewdly. Legally, we should explore what else we can look into. The City Attorney explained that the City authorized execution of an option. The City decided to purchase the Bluffs. There was no mention of a third party. The motion is to find a third party. Now he does not know what he is supposed to do. City administration is actively listening to proposals. The City intends to turn it over to a developer sooner or later.

There is Council concern on the intention of this; shared concerns with City Attorney. On September 26, 2006 the motion was made and seconded. At the last meeting Council voted concession to residents. Now this just confuses the matter. Mr. Altman confirmed that the City Attorney is correct regarding discussions; the City has been looking for a third party. The City is diligently working to those ends. Our intentions are focused on someone assuming the option. The motion was made in August or September. The closing is pending HUD approval. We could close on the property and still flip it. Administration looks for most the most options available.

A Substitute **Motion** was made by Councilor Cuffey, and seconded by Councilor Sealey, for the City to continue its due diligence and pursuit in closing of the Bluffs property and at the same time continue to pursue a developer to assume the option to purchase the property; however, until such time, the City will continue to pursue the purchase of the Bluffs. Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Councilor Harris | - | yes |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

Councilor Harris indicated that the owners of the property are anxiously awaiting selling the property. Everybody here will do everything and anything to get another developer for that property.

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REGULAR BUSINESS – POLICE DEPARTMENT – SRO INCENTIVE GRANTS FUND-CONTINUING PROGRAM

The Bureau of Police requested approval to apply for \$50,000 in funding for the SRO Incentive Grants Fund-Continuing Program. \$12,575 will be required for local match. The DCJS announced the availability of state funds through the School Resource Officer (SRO) Incentive Grants Fund Program. The SRO Grant (07-C4464FR07) received in Jul 2006 for the program at Carter G. Woodson Middle School establishes the department's eligibility. \$12,575 local match (department funds); \$3,095 costs not covered by grant monies.

Motion was made by Councilor Emerson, and seconded by Councilor Cuffey, to resolve to approve grant application for SRO Incentive grants Fund – Continuing Program and \$12,575 local match. Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|
| Councilor Harris | - | out of the room |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

REGULAR BUSINESS – APPROVAL OF THE DESIGNATION OF FUNDS FOR FOUR-FOR-LIFE PROGRAM

The Hopewell Emergency Crew is requesting funds in the amount of \$15,267.55 be designated to their organization. The City of Hopewell has received Fiscal Year 2007 Four-for-Life payment for Emergency Medical Services in the amount of \$15,267.55. The Four-for-Life program, as amended in 1990, stipulates that two additional dollars be charged and collected at the time of registration of each passenger vehicle, pickup, and panel truck. The funds collected, pursuant to Section 46.2-694 of the Code of Virginia shall be used only for emergency medical services. The Hopewell Emergency Crew, Inc. requests that these program funds in the amount of \$15,267.55 be given to their organization. These funds will be used to purchase medical supplies and for expenses related associated with training programs.

Motion was made by Vice Mayor Pelham, and seconded by Councilor Bailey, to resolve to authorize distribution of funding to the Hopewell Emergency Crew. Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|
| Councilor Harris | - | out of the room |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

REPORTS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES - RC&D

Vice Mayor Pelham recently attended a meeting of the RC&D. There are some wells still located within the City. The RC&D will cap the wells for safety. The organization does not prohibit use of the wells; it just caps the well for safety reasons.

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REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Councilor Bailey reminded everyone about the Cat Quest on Saturday, April 14. Everyone is invited to the City Marina. On the evening of May 8 the Kiwanis Club will sponsor a Roast at Crystal Lake. Ticket may be purchased at Hopewell Office Supply and from any Kiwanis Club member. The incoming City Manager, Ed Daley, is a Kiwanis Club member. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Bench Dedication will be held on Saturday, April 14 in Ashford Civic Plaza.

Councilor Harris invited everyone to the Revival beginning on April 11 at 7:30 PM at Union Baptist Church on Terminal Street; it will run all week.

Councilor Cuffey is excited about the new City Manager. He has attended some committee meetings, including the Dock Commission. They are in the process of selecting a Harbor Master. He also attended a School Board meeting, which was interested because he has a 7-year old son in the Hopewell public school system. It was a well-organized meeting and very professional. He received lots of calls regarding the proposed cigarette tax; he received 25 calls yesterday alone. There is no way he would vote for it – no way! He urged citizens to look out for crime in their neighborhoods.

Councilor Emerson also vowed not to vote for the cigarette tax. He has received many e-mails, phone calls, and letters opposing the proposed cigarette tax. He told the City Manager to come up with a substitute for the \$400,000. He reminded citizens that on April 20 at 3:00 PM the new library would be dedicated. The Chamber of Commerce annual dinner is scheduled at the new library on April 19.

Vice Mayor Pelham thanked Police Chief James Stanley and Deputy Chief Ray Baxley and their staff for their work in Arlington Heights after a senior citizen was attacked. A 65-year old gentleman was a victim.

Mayor Taylor reported that the Hopewell Clean City Commission has scheduled its 2007 Spring Clean UP Week from Saturday April 21-April 28. The Convenience Center would be open Monday-Friday, 12:30-6:00 PM, and Saturday 8:00 AM-3:00 PM. Also, he is very excited about the new City Manager, Ed Daley.

ADJOURN

At 10:55 PM, **motion** was made by Councilor Sealey, and seconded by Councilor Emerson, to adjourn the meeting. Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Councilor Harris | - | yes |
| Councilor Emerson | - | yes |
| Councilor Sealey | - | yes |
| Mayor Taylor | - | yes |
| Vice Mayor Pelham | - | yes |
| Councilor Cuffey | - | yes |
| Councilor Bailey | - | yes |

Steven R. Taylor, Mayor

Ann M. Romano, City Clerk